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ABSTRACT

College and university administrators go through three types of transitions: job transitions, career transitions, and life transitions. Each of these is detailed in this conference speech and suggestions are made for assisting administrators with such changes. Reference is made to experimental services designed and implemented over the past three years by the Kellogg Foundation-funded Center for Professional Development at the Kansas City Regional Council for Higher Education (KCRCHE). Assistance with job transitions includes utilization of peer consultants, comparative surveys of other institutions and their administrators, and in-service training courses. Career and life transitions are helped by career planning seminars, job search seminars, one-to-one consultations, and referrals to psychotherapists. It is suggested that a balanced administrative development program should consist of both a training component to assist administrators in learning new job responsibilities, and a personal development component to facilitate the complex personal-professional growth process of administrators. (LBH)

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PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS

I. TYPES OF TRANSITIONS

College and university administrators go through three types of transitions: 1) job transitions, 2) career transitions and 3) life transitions.

A. Job Transitions

Job transitions occur periodically for most administrators as they progress along a career track. A student counselor or chaplain becomes a dean of students. A department chairperson becomes academic dean. An academic dean or financial vice president becomes a president. These are often demanding transitions, but they are generally planned and prized transitions.

B. Career Transitions

The second type of transition is the broader category of career transitions, the move from one career track to another. To move from teaching and research into administration is a common career transition for individuals in higher education. A move back into teaching is also common. Another career transition is out of higher education altogether, from a college or university to a foundation, government agency, business or industry.

C. Life Transitions

The third type of transition, the life transition, is the most complex and the least adequately understood at present. Yet it appears that everyone experiences several of these, at fairly predictable times in their lives, and frequently with a similar configuration of stresses and resolutions.

In my work, I can clearly identify three periods in which most people go through transitions, that is, periods in which they are bombarded with new thoughts about themselves, new responsibilities, new environments in which to live, or other new and pressing factors. One of these occurs for college and university administrators when they cut the Gordian knot, leave their surrogate families behind in the graduate schools, and take their first jobs. The transition is eased by the fact that they move from one campus to another and are comforted by the familiar characteristics of the campus culture they knew as students. Their transition is made difficult by the fact that faculty members are not trained for their teaching responsibilities and many administrators, particularly those on the academic side, are not trained for their administrative responsibilities. The first several years of learning by trial and error are particularly strenuous.

The second clearly distinguishable life transition for administrators occurs at mid-career and, if traumatic, is popularly referred to as the "mid-career or mid-life crisis." The mid-career doubts and resulting tensions generally occur after administrators have been pursuing their career goals for ten years are more, often with tunnel-like vision. Many of them have been moving up the career ladder quickly, making impressive strides. Then in their late 30's to early 40's, they perceive that their careers and indeed, their lives, are half over. No matter how hard they work, they realize that they will probably not reach the goals they set 10 or more years earlier. From the perspective of mid-career the earlier goals seem unrealistic and unattainable. And the

larger questions about the meaning of life and of death become disturbing. Until mid-career (or mid-life), time has not been a major problem. There has always appeared to be enough of it. (I am talking here not about "day" time, of which there is never enough for busy people, but "life" time.) Although we know at a cognitive level that the average life expectancy is about 70 years, often it is not until mid-career that this fact forces itself upon us, demanding to be accepted at a deeper psychic level. It is this question of time that demands resolution and appears to trigger the mid-career crisis. I believe Dr. Hodgkinson will provide a more elaborate theoretical analysis of this and other life transitions in the keynote address he is scheduled to deliver. What I would want to say in greater elaboration would be taken in part from his article "Adult Development: Implications for Faculty and Administrators," published in the fall 1974 issue of the Educational Record.

There is one additional transition that is clearly a problem for many college and university administrators. It is the transition from career to retirement. Even though this is a more clearly identifiable and therefore more predictable transition than the one that sneaks up on people at mid-career, people tend to avoid planning for the retirement transition. This can result in some very difficult times when the retirement date finally arrives. Sometimes no avocational interests have been cultivated to fill the activity vacuum. In this case frustration and depression are the result.

II. ASSISTING ADMINISTRATORS WITH THEIR TRANSITIONS

Leaving further theoretical considerations to Dr. Hodgkinson, I will move to a description of ways to assist administrators with their job, career and life transitions. For this purpose, reference will be made to experimental services designed and implemented over the past three years by the Kellogg Foundation-funded Center for Professional Development at the Kansas City Regional Council for Higher Education (KCRCHE). The idea for the Center was the inspiration of the KCRCHE President, Dr. Lloyd Averill, a product of his humanistic and personal development approach to working with faculty members and administrators.

A. Assisting with Job Transitions

Job transitions are the least complex of the various types of transitions. Administrators move from one job to another within the same institution and from one institution to another. Such transitions are important to the morale of many individuals who need the occasional stimulus represented by the challenge of new jobs. Often college and university personnel have little or no training for their new positions but after their appointments seek training through summer school courses, summer institutes, shorter seminars and workshops during the academic year, and personally designed reading programs.

If trends within the KCRCHE member institutions are any indication, there is a rapid turnover of administrators, stimulated at least in part by the pressures of managing the retrenchment process in their colleges and universities. Since 1972, the 17 KCRCHE member institutions have been served by 29 different chief executive officers (including interim appointments), 12 of whom had no prior experience in that position. During the same four years, the 17 institutions have been serviced by 39 different academic deans (including interim appointments), 22 of them with no prior experience in the position. In one

college last year, the acting president, academic dean, development director, and registrar were all newly appointed and inexperienced in those positions; in another college, new and inexperienced officers included the president, academic dean, dean of students and registrar; in a third, such officers included the president, academic dean, dean of students, director of development and director of admissions. As the decline in the student-aged population sets in over the next few years, the pressures on administrations are likely to increase, the rate of job turnover go up, and the need for training replacements become correspondingly more burdensome.

1. Peer consultants:

In response, the KCRCHE Center for Professional Development has made arrangements for administrators recently appointed to positions and needing to rapidly gain familiarity and experience with their new responsibilities to receive advice and assistance from experienced and successful counterparts on other KCRCHE campuses. Sometimes arrangements are made for peer consultants to visit the recently appointed administrators on the latters campuses, and sometimes the recently appointed administrators do the visiting. It has been our experience that only one or two meetings take place, each for a few hours to a full day in duration. Nevertheless, the potential exists for a more extended series of consultations.

We have used our Kellogg funds to pay modest honoraria to the peer consultants, $25.00 for half a day of consultation and $50.00 for a full day, plus the cost of transportation and meals. Since the travel distances are not great, overnight expenses are seldom involved. Despite the little remuneration, without exception, those asked have been willing to serve as peer consultants. They have enjoyed the teaching-counseling role and the opportunity to share their expertise.

The peer consultation relationships have proved very helpful. They have assisted newly appointed administrators to "learn the ropes" quickly and inexpensively. They have provided individualized, confidential, and sympathetic support during the first difficult year.

2. Comparative Survey:

Similar to the peer consultation approach to training is the comparative survey approach in which newly appointed administrations visit their counterparts on at least two or three other campuses. Although the peer consultation relationship is not established through the honorarium device mentioned above, the new administrators have the opportunity to observe their counterparts at work, to talk on a more casual basis with counterparts, to read reports and policy statements produced by their counterparts and to gain an understanding of the various procedures that can be used in the job.

3. In-Service Training Courses

While it is possible for single institutions to make peer consultation and comparative survey arrangements for their new administrators, the in-service training course approach requires the coordination of a consortium organization. Recently KCRCHE has received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education to run a series of in-service training courses for various administrators. These courses employ the best known trainers from around the country. The trainers spend one day a month in Kansas City for a full five-month semester, and academic credit is given through the extension service of the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Courses organized so far are:

a. Retention: Concepts, Problems and Solutions
b. Issues in Higher Education: An Institutional Perspective
c. Basic Management
d. Curriculum Development: Models and Methods
e. Long Range Planning Techniques

For example, the retention course was organized for counselors, deans of students and other administrators who have an influence on the quality of student life on the campuses. Dr. Everett Hadley, Executive Director of Admissions and Retention Programs at Drake University, was the trainer for the course.

There are important advantages of this cooperative approach to more formal training in preparation for job transitions. The best trainers in the country can be hired at substantially less cost than that needed to send trainees to week-long workshops in distant parts of the country, and the training can be accomplished with a minimum of disruption to the normal work schedule of administrators. Although KCRCHE has obtained FIPSE funds to experiment with this approach, a group of cooperative institutions could pool their own funds at a favorable cost-benefit ratio to achieve the same result.

B. Assistance with Career and Life Transitions

For individual administrators there are larger questions than the ones related to training for jobs. The questions are these: How can I plan systematically and insightfully for future jobs? How can I decide what is the career most suitable to my own interests and talents and most realistic in view of the conditions prevailing in the world of work? Indeed, what role should my career play in relationship to my family life, my community activities, my avocational interests and other dimensions of my life? The KCRCHE Center for Professional Development has designed and implemented services that assist administrators who are asking these large and complex questions. In the process the Center is assisting them with important career and life transitions.

1. Career Planning Seminars

Some people allow external circumstances to make job and larger career and life decisions for them; to some extent this is unavoidable.

However, it is certainly wiser to change jobs and/or careers on the basis of analysis of past activities and projection of future goals. This puts individuals' fates more in their own hands. Based on this view, the KCRCHE Center for Professional Development has been running two-day career planning seminars over the past two years. These seminars, which are open to faculty members and administrators, encourage individuals to become more aware of their vocational and avocational interests, and their skills. The seminars also encourage short and long-term career and life planning.

These seminars take place during the afternoon and evening of the first day and the morning and afternoon of the second day. During the several weeks preceding the seminar, participants are asked to take a battery of three standardized tests commonly used in vocational counseling. These are the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and the FIRO-B. They focus upon vocational interests, personal preferences and inter-personal relations. The tests are scored before the seminar begins and then analyzed during the first afternoon. This activity helps participants to engage in a non-threatening form of self-analysis.

In the evening of the first day, there are values clarification and other non-touchy-feely self-awareness exercises that assist participants to do more creative thinking about themselves. The following morning time is set aside for group discussion of career issues, and participants have the opportunity to be resources to each other. During the later morning and afternoon, participants engage in setting career and life goals and in planning ways to attain goals.

The Center staff offers one-to-one follow-up for seminar participants who seek it. This follow-up capability individualizes the career planning services. We continue to work with individuals on their plans and consider this follow-up dimension essential to the success of the seminars. Faculty members and administrators are enthusiastic about this service, and I believe the service is making a difference in the lives of many who take advantage of it.

2. Job Search Seminars

The job search seminars were organized to meet the needs of people who were losing their contracts as a result of retrenchment. However, it has become clear that for some faculty and administrators, these seminars are useful extensions of the career planning seminars. Career planning leads some people out of their present jobs, out of their present careers and, indeed, out of higher education altogether. The job search seminars help such individuals to plan and execute their moves.

The KCRCHE Center for Professional Development has conducted at least one job search seminar each year over the past three years. These take place during a single day. During the morning participants hear about the projected decline in student-aged population over the next 15 years and discuss how this is likely to affect the job market in higher education. They also hear about regions of the country and sectors of the national economy that are projected to grow the fastest during the next few years. This provides participants with a perspective on the

world of work that they need in planning critical job and career transitions.

During the afternoon, the Center staff turns to the "nuts and bolts" of the job search: the difference between a resume and a curriculum vitae and how to write both, how to build a dossier, identify job possibilities, approach potential employers and conduct a job interview.

As with participants in the career planning seminars, the Center staff encourages participants to take advantage of one-to-one follow-up opportunities. While the career planning seminars emphasize self-awareness and therefore tend to be experiential in nature, the job search seminars are informational and therefore organized in a didactic mode. However, the appreciative responses of participants in both types of seminars indicate that both meet important personal and professional needs.

It is more difficult to run these seminars on a single campus than in a consortium or other multi-institutional setting. When the seminars are held in a setting detached from the campus, confidentiality and anonymity are more assured and participants feel freer to explore their personal thoughts and feelings. However, the Center staff has run career planning sessions for personnel on a single campus. If the focus is on revitalization of participants' relations to their current institutions, the planning activities can prove very useful.

3. One-to-one Consultation

The KCRCHE Center for Professional Development staff offers job, career or life transition consultation on a one-to-one basis to faculty members and administrators. It is not always convenient or appropriate for individuals needing assistance with these transitions to participate in the seminars discussed above. The seminars take place at infrequent intervals, and furthermore, some people feel uncomfortable in group settings. Campus-based administrators, particularly presidents and deans, now feel free to refer their staff subordinates and faculty members to the Center staff for such consultation. In this way, the Center staff becomes adjunct counseling staff to campus administrators. This is a useful role for consortium staff to play. If consortium resources are not available, each institution should have someone available to assist campus personnel with their personal and professional transition needs. This individual would most likely be a dean, counselor or chaplain.

4. Referrals to Psychotherapists

Occasionally the stresses caused by transitions are so great that individuals need more than the assistance of a sympathetic facilitator. They need the services of a trained psychotherapist. The KCRCHE Center for Professional Development has a list of psychotherapists of proven capability and makes referrals to them whenever requested or whenever the Center staff thinks that individuals' problems require it. We recommend that every college and university appoint someone to provide this type of confidential referral service, and that the existence of the service be publicized.

III. CONCLUDING NOTE

A balanced administrative development program, whether organized totally within a single college or university or with the assistance of multi-institutional organizations, should have two parts. The first is a training component, to assist administrators to learn their new job responsibilities. The second is a personal development component, to facilitate the complex personal-professional growth process of administrators. Under II A above are several approaches that can be added to the already established list of approaches to the training component. Under II B are listed several approaches to the personal development component. As yet there are few if any personal development services for administrators in higher education. As colleges and universities begin to take administrative development more seriously, it is my hope that the more immediate and more easily identifiable training needs will not overshadow the needs for important personal-professional services.

NOTE: Please feel free to contact me for further information about the services discussed in this paper.

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